

Good teachers do more than teach – they create, cultivate, and inspire. Teachers can be powerful and dynamic forces in motivating children to succeed in school, which leads to success in life. There are few professions these days that provide opportunities to change lives. No doubt about it...teachers truly do make a difference.

It is an honor to write the foreword for this year's "Teachers Make a Difference" book. In it you will read incredible stories about teachers who helped invest in our future by positively influencing and empowering children with the gift of learning. What is perhaps the most exciting part of this book is that these teachers are located right here in the school districts among us.

Attending schools here in North Central Washington for my entire K-12 education was truly a blessing. I learned from many fantastic teachers throughout my years in the Wenatchee School District, and I am truly grateful for the inspiration, instruction, and guidance that they provided. I thought it might be fitting for me to share a few stories about teachers who influenced me at every school along the way in elementary, middle, and high school.

Sue Berry was my second-grade teacher at Washington Elementary. She noticed that I loved to participate in class, but she couldn't understand much of what I said. At parent-teacher conference time, she had both the courage and compassion to discuss with my family a problem that they didn't hear – my speech impediments. Soon they started listening for them. Later that week at a local bakery, my mother overheard me enthusiastically tell the owner that "We really like a lotta bwead." The owner looked down at me, smiled widely, and replied, "You're so cute. How do you like your water bed?" My parents realized Mrs. Berry was right! I later spent months in intensive speech therapy, both in the district and with a private therapist. Mrs. Berry was a fantastic teacher in so many amazing ways, but nothing could have helped me more than her noticing this need early in my life...and caring enough about me to tell my parents.

Kevin Ore taught English and History at Orchard Middle School. He was young and energetic. He found a way to involve the entire class in every discussion and lesson. What was extra special about Mr. Ore is that not only was he my middle school teacher, he was also the high school cross country and track coach. Little did I realize that my 8th grade teacher Mr. Ore (soon-to-be Coach Ore) spent half his time teaching me and half his time recruiting me. He explained the team scoring to me, shared stories of his collegiate running days, and taught me to set high goals. This encouragement led me to a state

qualifying race my freshman season, the 100th Boston Marathon in 1996, and years of fond running memories thereafter. I often apply my distance running principles and work ethic to other aspects of life. I offer a special thanks to coaches and advisors because extracurricular activities can make immeasurable differences for children.

Gayle Northcutt was my freshman English teacher at Wenatchee High School. Simply put, she is a special person and one to whom I will also be forever grateful. Ms. Northcutt had a masterful command of her subject area and an incredible way of motivating students. She cared about each one of us – and we all knew it. One day she asked me to hang around after class. When all of the students had left, she calmly explained to me that I lacked English skills, primarily writing skills. I was stunned. If Ms. Northcutt had not been so genuinely kind and compassionate about it, I probably would have been angry. I knew right then that she wanted to help me. She even offered to spend extra time with me individually. It took weeks and even months, but I learned to write well. She patiently taught me word-by-word, sentence-by-sentence, and page-by-page. Thanks to Ms. Northcutt, I refuse to be intimidated by any writing assignment or task...even to this day.

As your State Representative, you can probably imagine that my job often involves speaking at events, enduring marathon days at the Capitol, or writing a variety of policy positions and published pieces. I think of amazing teachers like Mrs. Berry who helped me speak clearly, Mr. Ore who trained me to endure, and Ms. Northcutt who taught me to write. The amazing thing is that these are just a few of the hundreds of outstanding teachers who make a difference each day here in North Central Washington.

This book is full of inspirational stories of educators who made a difference.

We are blessed to have them among us teaching our children!

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